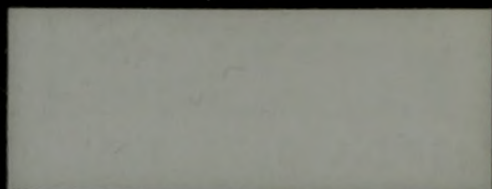


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THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
DIVISION OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

STUDENT SERVICE CENTER

ANNUAL REPORT //

1982-1983

BUREAU OF STUDENT, COMMUNITY AND ADULT SERVICES

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## INTRODUCTION

The Student Service Centers are student managed and operated information and technical assistance centers which provide information on education to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other citizens of the Commonwealth. In responding to hundreds of requests for assistance each year, the staff answers questions, researches issues, and makes referrals to other agencies. Typical requests for assistance include providing information on minimum competency exams, locating educational resources for school dropouts, and reviewing procedures for suspensions from school. The staff also reaches out to a variety of different groups, presenting information to them about numerous issues, making every effort to mold a presentation to the group's specific needs.

The Student Services Centers began in 1971 as a few volunteer students managing a resource desk in the Boston office of the Department of Education. Today, there are centers in five of the regional education centers: Western Massachusetts, Southeast, Northeast, Central Massachusetts, Greater Boston, and in a downtown Boston center located in space donated by the Massachusetts Office for Children.

Each Student Service Center is staffed by two or three full-time students who work in the Center an average of 10 hours per week after school for minimum hourly wages. The staff reflects the diversity of the student population of the Commonwealth in terms of race, ethnic background, linguistic group, socioeconomic class, and academic achievement and interests.

The centers are supported by professional staff members of the Bureau of Student, Community and Adult Services. Professional staff from throughout the Department advise the Center staff on how to provide services to communities, help train the center staff to learn about pertinent laws and regulations, develop workshop presentations, promote interoffice communication and personal interaction, and hold supervisory responsibility.

The Student Service Centers have compiled an impressive record of service to Massachusetts this year. While not reducing assistance provided directly to students, the staff of the Centers have fulfilled the Board of Education's directive that citizens other than students also be served by the Centers. Whenever possible, the Student Service Centers have attempted to strengthen their relationship with Department of Education personnel by participating in the successful completion of Department operational objectives. Additionally, the Student Service Centers have supported the activities of the Massachusetts Student Advisory Council both at the state and regional levels, and a strong relationship between these two student organizations has provided many mutual benefits.





## I. FY 83 ACTIVITIES

Each of the six Centers performed some similar duties. Some resources were identical to each other, while other projects varied from region to region. The activities which were performed in each center were:

1. monthly regional Student Advisory Council law presentations and personnel skill workshops;
2. workshops at local schools;
3. handling local school complaints and community requests;
4. maintaining and developing contacts with regional center staff;
5. performing necessary administrative tasks, such as submitting duty schedules and monthly reports; and
6. maintaining regional files.

In an effort to reduce duplication and assist each Center in defining its purpose more clearly, the staff agreed to centralize major tasks. By assigning each center a specific major responsibility, staff members could be hired who had strengths which would be directed to a given project. Specialization would also relieve each center of repetitive tasks. With more time to concentrate and develop special expertise in one area, products of better quality would be provided.

The areas of major responsibility were designed as follows:

- A. Publicity which entailed developing promotional contacts to inform local communities about the resources offered by the Centers. Public service announcements, newspaper articles, and arrangements for appearances on cable television by local staff members were developed by the Center responsible for coordinating this major state-wide responsibility.
- B. Topic File. Each Center maintains substantial files containing information about laws, workshops and important educational matters. By combining these resources in one Center, the files have been improved dramatically. In addition, it has alleviated the continuous burden on all staff to keep up with filing and updating this information.
- C. Publication and Dissemination. The Centers regularly write and distribute publications to general groups of the educational community. Mailings to school newspaper editors, student council presidents and Student Advisory Committees to School Committees convey pertinent information. By delegating the responsibility for developing newsletter/publications to one Center and the responsibility for disseminating information to each region to another, all are benefiting from this resource.





- D. Workshops. A major role of the Centers is to prepare monthly workshops on laws for the Regional Student Advisory Councils to the Board of Education. Designing workshops, distributing the instructions, developing follow-up materials and training the facilitators is now the responsibility of one Center. Workshops offered to individual schools and outside groups are still designed and delivered by each individual regional Student Service Center.
- E. Boston. With the opening of the new Boston Student Service Center in the Boston Office for Children, a unique opportunity exists to meet the needs of the students of Boston. Student government organizations at the middle and high school levels have been created, but are not operational in all schools. The Boston Center staff (generally students who are currently enrolled in the Boston Public School System) provide technical assistance to strengthen the schools' student organizations.

## II. FY 83 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Student Service Centers have enjoyed a productive year. The following are the major accomplishments listed by activity or task and highlighting the regional Student Service Center which coordinated or documented the activity:

(It should be noted that the Western Massachusetts Student Service Center, covering the Springfield and Pittsfield education regions, opened July 1, 1983. Therefore, their accomplishments are not submitted in this FY report.)

### A. Requests/Complaints

This year nearly five hundred requests (an average of forty per month) were documented at the Student Service Centers state-wide. The most requested publications included the Student Records Regulations, Check It Out: A Guide to Rights and Responsibilities for Massachusetts Students, and A Student's Guide to Peer Counseling. Requests for information ranged from research on academic punishment to opportunities in vocational education.

- Alternative education
- Athletic regulations
- Corporal punishment
- Curriculum Innovation
- Detention
- Drop-out resources
- Education laws
- Entrance exams
- Equal Education
- Financial aid
- First Amendment
- G.E.D.
- Gifted and Talented Education Opportunities
- Jobs
- Leadership training
- Middle School Student Council
- Military School
- National Honor Society



Occupational education  
 Organizing school councils  
 Peer counseling  
 Private schools  
 Rights of 18-year olds  
 Sex discrimination  
 Student records regulations  
 Special education  
 Special education parents' rights  
 Students Against Drunk Driving

School budget  
 School climate  
 School year/day regulations  
 Summer camps  
 Teachers' rights  
 Transportation  
 Tuition tax credits  
 Vocational education  
 Workshop development

All Student Service Centers worked closely with the Bureau of Student, Community and Adult Services' advisors in handling complaints from students and parents.

By region, the number of requests:

Boston/Quincy	111
Central	124
Greater Boston	57
Northeast	90
Southeast	<u>100</u>
Total	482

## B. Information Files

One of the primary responsibilities of the Student Service Centers is to inform the public about educational issues. This allows people to take advantage of available educational opportunities and involve themselves in issues which concern them. In order to carry out this responsibility the Center must maintain accurate files.

The process of updating educational information files is a constant one. This year, in order to reduce duplication and maintenance time, the master topic file was updated and maintained at the Greater Boston Student Service Center in Wellesley.

The "law" file, which previously covered only student's rights, now includes all state education laws. The one hundred and fifty entries are comprised of text-related publications and court opinions on each piece of legislation.

The "topic" file consists of information on three hundred and fifty subjects including post-secondary academic programs, government agencies and social issues. This file has become the base for the centralized file to be used by all centers.

The Central Massachusetts Student Service Center developed a college file and a financial aid information file. This file allows staff state-wide to respond quickly to requests on the location of specific programs, as well as the availability of alternative education programs and career guidance.

The Boston/Quincy Student Service Center established a resource file for use by the task forces of the State Student Advisory Council. The Center members research requests of the task force members throughout the year.





All centers updated the "community" file which contains school handbooks from local school systems. This file assists staff workers with questions about specific school rules, and is used to provide background information on extracurricular activities and school functions in each district. These files are maintained as a supplement to the official depository of handbooks in the Quincy office.

### C. FY 83 Workshops

The Student Service Centers have offered workshops to all segments of the school community. The reputation of the centers within the Department and among members of the school community prompts many unsolicited requests for workshops every year. This contact with the public has repeatedly been cited by student staff as the most challenging and rewarding part of their jobs. Workshops were attended by as few as six and as many as sixty participants.

Regional workshops conducted this year included:

#### In Boston/Quincy area:

- 1 Leadership training workshop
- 2 Sexual harassment workshops

#### Central

- 1 Bilingual education representation workshop
- 1 The need for student representation workshop
- 1 Understanding school budgets workshop
- 5 Student rights and responsibilities workshop

#### Greater Boston

- 1 Records regulations workshop
- 4 Students rights and responsibilities workshops
- 2 Student advisory council training workshop
- 4 Leadership training workshops
- 3 Student council organization workshops
- 1 School newspapers organization workshop
- 2 Understanding school budgets workshops
- 1 First Amendment workshop





Northeast

- 1 Communication skills workshop
- 1 Suspension, rights under due process workshop
- 1 Student council organization workshop

Southeast

- 1 Nutrition guidelines workshop
- 1 Student council organization workshop

D. Regional Student Advisory Council/Student Advisory Committee to School Committee Support

In addition to workshops presented to the school community, the Student Service Centers offer monthly workshops to their respective regional Student Advisory Councils. These workshops address two major areas, organization and communication skills, and "law of the month."

This year the Northeast Student Service Center members committed themselves to attending all Regional Student Advisory Council meetings and presenting workshops to their regional Council delegates. Central Massachusetts Student Service Center staff went further by assisting in agenda writing, offering a one-day leadership training seminar and becoming a sound base for Regional Council operations.

The Greater Boston Student Service Center members participated in a Student Advisory Council task force activity by providing resources and advice on developing teacher evaluation projects.

Boston/Quincy Student Service Center members continued to maintain State Student Advisory Council task force files, and the Southeast Student Service Center members offered workshops to the regional Council on request.

E. Publicity

Publicity of Center services continued to be a primary activity this year, and, as usual, all public relations work was coordinated in conjunction with the Commissioner of Education's Office of Press Relations.

1. Radio

Most Centers sent public service announcements to radio stations in their regions advertising services available through the Centers. Response was favorable. Members of the Boston/Quincy staff have recently been guests on several public affairs shows including WUMB, Teen Talk, sponsored by the University of Massachusetts, Boston.



## 2. Television

The Greater Boston Student Service Center aired public service announcements notifying individuals of its ability to provide advice and referrals to other agencies. This publicity was aimed at specific services such as available law workshops and peer counseling.

The Northeast Student Service Center staff was involved with a cable television interview for a nightly newscast highlighting Student Service Centers' services and activities. Unfortunately, the tape was only viewed in a few nearby towns.

## 3. Newspaper

Although most of the Student Service Centers made considerable efforts to receive local, regional and student newspaper coverage, this type of publicity was scarce this year. The Northeast Student Service Center, however, had several articles published in an area newspaper.

The Southeast Student Service Center attempted to establish a school newspaper sharing network. The plan included disseminating student-written articles of interest to all area school newspapers. Unfortunately, this project was met with little response, and it was decided that research and evaluation was necessary before implementation was resumed.

## 4. Public Information Booths

The Student Service Centers brought materials to locations where large numbers of students tend to congregate. The Central Massachusetts Student Service Center was very successful in finding an area library where staff had to replenish the brochures on an almost daily basis.

## 5. Dissemination

Dissemination is an essential part of each Center. Creating plans and the implementation of a systematic approach to distribute information to schools and guidance counselors are the responsibility of each Center. This activity serves to introduce the Center, its activities and publications.

The Central Student Service Center offered the publication "A Student's Guide to Special Education" to special education leaders. Over five hundred and sixty were requested and then distributed as a result of the promotion.







## F. Staff Development

Hiring new student staff is an annual task at the Student Service Centers. Given the serious responsibilities of the Student Service Center staff, criteria for selecting new staff members is multi-faceted and interviewing is comprehensive. The Student Service Centers have also developed staff performance review procedures this year.

An operational plan for the Centers is now in draft form and has been distributed to all staff for review and additions. The Student Service Center staff have monthly state-wide planning meetings to coordinate efforts, to reestablish goals and to offer solutions and suggestions for improving office management. This also provides an opportunity for staff members to exchange workshop ideas, give project status reports, and to discuss general planning in response to the operational plan.

## G. CONFERENCE PLANNING

The staff of three Centers participated actively in the planning of major conferences during the past year.

1. The Greater Boston Student Service Center staff members assisted in coordinating the State Student Advisory Council training session at Thompson Island. Staff collaborated in the development of goals, proposed workshops, coordinated administrative details and assisted at the actual conference in May.
2. Both the Central and Southeast Student Service Centers were involved in planning conferences for local Student Advisory Committees to the School Committee. With the guidance of the Central Massachusetts Regional Education Center, in conjunction with an area school committee, workshops were presented by Student Advisory Council delegates, Student Service Center staff and school committee members. Workshop topics included understanding a school budget and methods to improve communications between students and adults. The conference received very high evaluations overall, and it will be repeated in the future.
3. The Central Massachusetts Student Service Center also offered a day-long conference to orient the new Regional Student Advisory Council. This series of workshops, a mini version of the annual student leadership training model offered by the Department at Simon's Rock Early College in August, was appropriately called Simon's "Pebble." This conference set a solid foundation for working with the Council and developed strong ties between the Central Student Service Center and the Regional Student Advisory Council.

## H. PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL EDUCATION CENTER ACTIVITIES

The wide range of services provided by the Regional Educational Centers to local school systems is a great resource to the Student Service Center



staff. Conversely, student cooperation is evident in the extensive use of the Student Service Center resource files by regional staff.

This year the Northeast Student Service Center staff was involved in the planning and production of a videotape project highlighting the Regional Educational Center activities. Central Student Service Center members worked closely with professional staff on a project involving the recognition of outstanding teachers in the region. In addition, this Center became a part of a group known as TEAM kids, a group working to determine the causes of current teacher-student communication problems in schools.

At the Greater Boston Student Service Center student staff participated in the reading of basic skills listening plans and reviewing grant applications under Chapter 636.

By increasing the participation in projects with the Regional Education Center professional staff this year the students have had an opportunity (1) to learn about other areas of Department of Education responsibility, and (2) bring the student's point of view to proposals under consideration by Department staff.

### III. FUTURE GOALS

#### A. Improving the Education of Special Needs Students

A major effort will be made to reach high school students with information about Chapter 766 so they can work to improve special education in their schools, and know services available to them. Student staff will be trained as facilitators to present information workshops about Chapter 766 to groups of students from interested schools.

#### B. Improve Guidance and Counseling Services

Student Service staff plan to contact guidance directors by distributing information about the services of the Student Service Centers. They will be trained to answer questions from the counselors on Student Records Regulations, innovative curriculum law, and all other laws affecting students. Through personal connections with guidance counselors, the Student Service Center hopes to increase its use as a resource for students and counselors alike.

#### C. Information Sharing

The Student Service Center staff, with the support from the Bureau of Student, Community and Adult Services staff, will continue to consider the need for publications and handbooks for dissemination.

#### D. Strengthening Student Organizations

The Student Service Centers will expend considerable effort in strengthening student organizations in Massachusetts through workshops and dissemination projects.





E. Student Councils

Student councils, the traditional student government organization in most schools, are often ineffective vehicles for student involvement on important issues facing schools. Often their focus is on social concerns rather than school governance. The Student Service Centers will offer student council organizations information and training needed to help them participate in school decision-making.

F. Regional Student Advisory Councils

Student Service Center staff will help to provide training workshops for the Student Advisory Council members in their region on a variety of student issues. Law of the month and skill building workshops are already prepared. Staff are ready to accept a key support role to the students of the Advisory Council this year.

G. School Newspaper Editors and School Student Library Assistants

These two groups are targeted by a Student Service Center for workshops because they feel they are key sources of information for students. The Center will present workshops for these students, hoping to enhance their role as conveyors of information to students on student rights and other key educational issues.

H. Regional and Division Support

The Student Service Centers have set a goal of developing and maintaining greater cooperation and support in the following:

1. Regional Advisory Council
2. Other Student Service Centers
3. Divisions in the areas of:
  - a. Occupational Education
  - b. Basic Skills
  - c. Special Education
  - d. Nutrition





## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Student Service Centers have provided extensive information and technical assistance services to student and adult citizens of the Commonwealth. The Student Service Centers have brought the unique and valuable perspective of high school students to the Department of Education's efforts to achieve the Board of Education's goals for FY 83. The Student Service Center model serves several broad educational purposes. This model is certainly replicable and satellite Student Service Centers are in operation in several high schools, especially in the Pittsfield region where there is no Student Service Center in the regional office.

### 1. Provides a Model of Participatory Education

One of the major recommendations of the 1976 report of the National Panel on High Schools and Adolescent Education was that participatory education programs, involving adolescents and interested adults, be initiated. Participatory education means pedagogical programs involving learning by doing what is socially useful, personally satisfying, and health-supporting for the individual and the community. To this end, the panel recommended that adolescents should be involved in government in all appropriate agencies in the community. Their role could be as interns, aides, part-time employees, and volunteers. In addition to the direct benefits to the community of student assistance, participatory education programs provide vital preparation for democratic citizenship.

Besides serving as a model in itself, the Student Service Centers actively promote student involvement with faculty and administration in school governance. The national panel emphasized that schools themselves need to be "laboratories-for-error in learning the roles of citizens," through allowing students realistic participation in the operation and management of the school. The Student Service Centers strongly encourage such student involvement, and provide information and training for students and school personnel interested in building structures for effective student participation in school decision-making.

### 2. Demonstrates a Peer Assistance Model

The notion of youth helping other youth by offering tutoring, counseling, information, and other kinds of assistance, is one that has been endorsed by many educators and youth service providers as a creative and effective learning approach. Peer assistance programs are based on the idea that trained youth often will be more effective than adults in reaching other youth with needed services. In addition, peer assistance programs offer unique learning opportunities to the youth providing the services, as well as benefits to others involved (e.g., teachers, counselors, and administrators of schools with peer assistance programs).

The Student Service Centers demonstrate an effective peer assistance model, which should answer some of the concerns of those educators who fear that youth are not capable of giving such service, or that such peer assistance programs are impractical.





3. Demonstrates Youth as Resources in School and Community

In the face of the many problems facing schools and communities today, and their increasingly limited resources for addressing those problems, schools and communities need to utilize all potential materials and financial and human resources in solving their problems. Students are a largely untapped resource for schools and communities. Students' unique perspectives, ideas, and energies should be sought and utilized by schools and communities in solving educational and other community problems. In arguing for youth involvement in their respective communities, Mary Conway Kohler, Director of the National Commission on Resources for Youth, says: "In every community there is a natural match between the yearnings of the young for significant roles and meaning and the needs of the community." Certainly this idea applies to students and the school community, as well as the broader community.

The Student Service Centers offer a working model of students as resources for the Department of Education, for the citizens served by the Centers, and for the schools seeking information and assistance.

4. Promotes the Vital Notion of Client Participation in Planning and Implementing Educational Change

The National Panel on High Schools and Adolescent Education strongly endorsed the participation of all members of the school community in achieving needed reform in schools. No plan for improvement, no matter how exciting, is appropriate to every local setting. Good will on the part of school administrators is not sufficient guarantee that programs will meet the needs and interests of the school community. Therefore, it is vital that all local community members, including students and other citizens, help shape new programs to fit their needs. The panel states: "Public vigilance is a necessary counter to the ever present tendency for agencies to retreat from their original goals..."

One of the major efforts of the Student Service Centers is to encourage, prepare, and train students to participate actively in governing their own schools. The Student Service Centers help students to effectively use existing vehicles for involvement in school decision-making, and to work with others in their school to create new vehicles if necessary. Such cooperative action among students and school personnel converts the mistrust and suspicion with which these groups often regard each other to mutual respect based on working together for shared goals.

Again, the Student Service Centers provide a model of students working effectively with adults in operating in educational organization and in seeking mutually determined goals.







